

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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MISSISSIPPI RESPONDING TO HAITI RELIEF EFFORTS

Jackson, Mississippi – Governor Haley Barbour is directing the response of Mississippi state agencies to help people in the beleaguered nation of Haiti, whose country was rocked by a devastating earthquake on January 12.

“Many people have already called my office offering assistance and needing information; in time, that assistance will be sorely needed. We’ve been advised by federal authorities that, for now, only search and rescue personnel, equipment and supplies are being allowed into Haiti,” Governor Barbour said.

To facilitate the flow of information regarding recovery efforts, the Governor has created a new link on his website. Some useful information is already posted regarding how Mississippians, charitable agencies, and private sources can contribute to recovery efforts.

Go to www.governorbarbour.com, then click on the “Help for Haiti” button.

“Knowing the kind of devastation caused by natural disasters, it's only appropriate that Mississippi join the federal government, other states, and private resources to help relieve the human suffering in Haiti,” Governor Barbour said.

Already, the Mississippi Air National Guard has launched a C-17 Globemaster III and crew to pick up Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) personnel and equipment in Martinsburg, West Virginia. The flight will then proceed to Port-au-Prince, Haiti, where the DHHS workers will provide aid in earthquake recovery efforts.

“I’m very proud of our National Guard, especially when they are involved on so many fronts,” said Governor Haley Barbour, commander in chief. “They always step up to the plate when their services are needed, and their services are definitely needed right now in Haiti.”

“When tragedy strikes our Soldiers and Airmen always come to the front, regardless of the situation,” said Maj. Gen. William L. Freeman,

Jr., the adjutant general of Mississippi. “Our people and our assets will be standing by for any other recovery support that may be required.

The C-17s and crews are part of the 172nd Airlift Wing based at Thompson Field in Flowood. They also continue their medical evacuations flights into Iraq and Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency is coordinating with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security on immediate needs in Haiti. At the current time, federal personnel trained in life-saving, search-and-rescue/recovery, and emergency care are arriving in Haiti.

MEMA Director Mike Womack and Mississippi Office of Homeland Security Director Jay Ledbetter participated in a conference call today with FEMA and U.S. Department of Homeland Security headquarters concerning Haiti.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is the lead agency with responsibility and authority to respond to disasters outside of the U.S. and its territories.

USAID with assistance from FEMA/DHS and DOD is deploying federal assets and selected state and local resources such as Urban Search and Rescue Teams (USAR) teams and assets part of the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS).

Currently, no additional resources of state or local government can be utilized, according to federal authorities.

The U.S. State Department offers these tips on how to help:

- The best way to help is to donate financially to organizations responding to a disaster. Cash allows relief professionals to procure exactly what is needed in a disaster situation and ensure that donations are culturally, dietary, and environmentally appropriate. Cash donations do not use up other scarce resources, such as transportation, staff time or warehouse space. As needed, cash can also be transferred quickly to where needed, helping bolster the economy of the disaster-stricken region. We are urging individuals interested in helping out to organize a community effort to raise money for the responding InterAction organizations which can be found here: <http://www.interaction.org/crisis-list/earthquake-haiti>.

- Nearly all of InterAction member organizations are unable to facilitate volunteer offers at this time given the circumstances on the ground. InterAction has been receiving hundreds of offers of volunteers, commodities and commercial ventures; unfortunately, we don't have the capacity to respond to or coordinate these. We are encouraging interested parties to register these offers with the Center for International Disaster Information online (www.cidi.org) or via the hotline (1-703-276-1914).

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